

REMARKS

Claims 1-29 were presented for examination and were pending in this application. In an Official Action dated September 5, 2003, claim 17 was allowed, claims 9-15 were objected to claims 1-8, 16, and claims 18-29 were rejected. Applicants thank Examiner for examination of the pending claims and addresses Examiner's comments below.

Applicants herein amend claims 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 19, 20, 26, 27, and 28. No claims are canceled and claim 30 is added. The amendments to the claims are believed not to introduce new matter, and their entry is respectfully requested. The claims have been amended to expedite the prosecution of the application in a manner consistent with the Patent Office Business Goals, 65 Fed. Reg. 54603 (Sept. 8, 2000). In making these amendments, Applicants have not and do not narrow the scope of the protection to which Applicants consider the claimed invention to be entitled and does not concede that the subject matter of such claims was in fact disclosed or taught by the cited prior art. Rather, Applicants reserve the right to pursue such protection at a later point in time and merely seeks to pursue protection for the subject matter presented in this submission.

Based on the amendments herein and the following Remarks, Applicants respectfully requests that the Examiner reconsider all outstanding objections and rejections, and withdraw them.

Response to Rejection Under 35 USC § 112, Paragraph 2

In the fifth paragraph of the Office Action, Examiner has rejected claims 8, 19, 20, 26, and 27 as allegedly not specifically pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter that the Applicants regards as the invention. Applicants have amended claims 8, 19, 20, 26,

and 27 to provide proper antecedent basis for “the texture” and “the control device.” Specifically, the preamble of claim 8 is amended to now recite “a texture that is alterable” and subsequently “the texture.” (Emphasis added). Similarly, the preamble of claims 19, 20, 26, and 27 also has been amended to provide proper antecedent basis and now recite “a texture of a region on a control device” and subsequently “the texture” and “the control device.” (Emphasis added).

These amendments of the claims are made so as to more clearly define the invention with proper antecedent basis, and not to narrow their scope of protection with respect to the prior art, or with respect to potentially infringing devices/compositions/articles. Applicants respectfully submit that these amendments obviate the basis of the rejection to claims 8, 19, 20, 26, and 27 and request withdrawal of the rejection of these claims.

Response to Rejection Under 35 USC 102(e)

In the sixth paragraph of the Office Action, Examiner rejects claims 1-8, 16, 26, and 27-29 under 35 USC § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,422,942 to Jeffway, Jr. et al. (“Jeffway”). This rejection is now traversed.

With respect to claim 1, Applicants have amended it to now recite:

A method of providing information from a host computer to a user through a control device, the host computer located apart from the control device, the method comprising:

receiving an event signal at the control device from the host computer indicating an occurrence of an event; and
responsive to receiving the event signal, generating a notification signal to alter a characteristic within a bounded region of the control device to notify the user that the event has occurred.

The claimed invention beneficially provides a user information from a “host computer located apart from the control device” of the occurrence of an event by “alter[ing] a characteristic within a bounded region of the control device.” Hence, the user is given notification of the occurrence of the event at the host computer through the control device, e.g., a computer mouse or a trackball, rather than through conventional methods and mechanisms that originate from the host computer itself.

The cited reference, Jeffway, fails to disclose Applicants’ claimed invention. Jeffway discloses a “self-contained electronic unit [that] includes a physically manipulable housing such as a mouse, a feedback device, and processing electronics.” (Abstract). Specifically, Jeffway discloses a virtual game board that is “is implemented in a unit that is movable by the player during game play.” (Col. 1, ll. 60-61). Moreover, the “unit displays a representation of its position as it is being moved [by] a display panel that displays an image of a section of a spatial background that moves or changes in response to movement of the unit [through] a built in position-tracking device that tracks a change in position of the unit, and updates the position representation accordingly.” (Col. 1, ll. 61 to col. 2, ll. 1).

This (and other) disclosure in the Jeffway specification clearly states that the unit disclosed in Jeffway is merely a handheld computer and control device integrated within a single unit (unit 20). When the unit 20 moves, a control unit 34 processes this movement and calculates a corresponding movement that is displayed on the display panel 30. (See col. 2, ll. 63 to col. 4, ll. 68; Figs. 2-6).

In contrast to Jeffway, the claimed invention is a control device that receives an event signal from a host computer that is “located apart” from it. In response to receiving the event

signal from the host computer, the control device “generat[es] a notification signal to alter a characteristic within a bounded region of the control device to notify the user that the event has occurred.” These claimed features are patentably distinct from Jeffway. Thus, based on the above amendment and the following remarks, Applicants respectfully request Examiner reconsider basis for the rejection to this claim and withdraw the rejection.

Further, as claims 2-7 are dependent on claim 1, all arguments advanced above with respect to claim 1 are hereby incorporated so as to apply to claims 2-7. Thus, Applicants respectfully request Examiner reconsider basis for the rejection to these claims and withdraw such rejections because the claimed invention is patentable over the cited reference.

As for claims 8-16 and 26-29, representative claim 8, recites

A method for notifying a computer user of occurrence of an event, the method comprising:

receiving an event signal from a host computer at a control device that the event has occurred, the control device including a region having a texture that is alterable; and

responsive to the event signal from the host computer, altering the texture in the region on the control device to provide tactile information to notify the user that the event has occurred.

The claimed invention beneficially recites a method of notifying a computer user of an event on the host computer by receiving an event signal from the host computer at the control device regarding the event and response to that signal altering a texture on a region on the surface of the control device. The change in texture characteristics on the control device also provides notification through a tactile indication or information (e.g., feedback) for the user. Hence, the claimed invention beneficially provides notification of an event to the user through a tactile medium on a control device rather than through conventional mechanisms such as sight and sound that are on the host computer itself.

The cited reference, Jeffway, fails to disclose Applicants' claimed invention. As described above, Jeffway simply discloses a solitary computer and pointing device unit that through which a user moves the unit 20 like a mouse or trackball and the internal control unit 34 calculates movement relative to a programmed game within the control unit 34. The movement result from this calculation is displayed on a display panel 30. (See col. 1, ll. 60 to col. 2, ll. 1; col. 2, ll. 63 to col. 4, ll. 68; Figs. 2-6).

– Jeffway fails to disclose "receiving an event signal from a host computer" because the unit 20 in Jeffway integrates a computer system and does not connect with a host computer. Jeffway also fails to disclose a "control device including a region on its surface having a texture that is alterable." The cited LEDs 52 in Jeffway are simply conventional LEDs that may be lit or unlit. However, this is not the claimed "texture that is alterable" such that it "alter[s] the texture in the region on the control device to provide tactile information to notify the user of the event." Likewise, although Jeffway discloses vibration effects (See col. 5, ll. 28-37), it is only in the context of the entire unit 20 vibrating, which is conventional and known. In contrast to Jeffway, Applicants' claimed invention recites for a texture within a region on the control device that may be altered to provide tactile information.

Thus, Applicants respectfully submit that Jeffway fails do disclose Applicants' claimed invention in claims 8-16 and 26-29 as now pending within this application. Applicants respectfully request Examiner reconsider basis for the rejection to these claims and withdraw such rejections, as the claimed invention is patentable over the cited reference.

Conclusion

Applicants have added new independent claim 30 for which Applicants request consideration and examination. Claim 30 substantially includes the limitations of previous claim 9, which was found allowable by Examiner. Applicants' respectfully submit that new claim 30 is supported by the specification and is commensurate within the scope of protection to which Applicants' believe they are entitled.

In sum, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1-30, as presented herein, are patentably distinguishable over the cited reference (including references cited, but not applied). Therefore, Applicants request reconsideration and allowance of these claims.

In addition, Applicants respectfully invite Examiner to contact Applicants' representative at the number provided below if Examiner believes it will help expedite furtherance of this application.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,
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Date: 2 December 2003

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